



## Saudi Arabian Information Resource

- [NEWS](#)
- [ISSUES](#)
- [MAP](#)
- [GALLERY](#)
- [INDEX](#)
- [CONTACT](#)

### Fact File

[Introduction](#)  
[Cities](#)  
[Islam](#)  
[History](#)  
[Kings](#)  
[Judicial System](#)  
[Government](#)  
[Oil](#)  
[Economy](#)  
[Industry](#)  
[Agriculture](#)  
[Transport](#)  
[Communications](#)  
[Electricity](#)  
[Social Development](#)  
[Foreign Relations](#)  
[Aid](#)  
[Addresses](#)  
[General Information](#)  
[Art and Culture](#)  
[Bibliography](#)  
[Links](#)  
[Statistics](#)

### Consultative Council: Introduction

The Consultative Council, or Majlis Al-Shoura (established by Royal Decree No. A/91, dated 27-8-1412) marked a significant move towards the formalization of the participative nature of government in Saudi Arabia. The Consultative Council was inaugurated by King Fahd himself in December, 1993. The announcement of the establishment of the Council, which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the accession of [King Fahd](#) and which was accompanied by details of a new "[basic law](#)", clearly marked the first steps towards a more broadly based involvement in the Kingdom's political processes.

The primary function of the broadly-based Majlis Al-Shoura is to provide the King with advice on issues of importance in the Kingdom.

The Consultative Council, when set up, consisted of a speaker and 60 members selected by the King. The Royal Decree establishing the Council made it clear, first and foremost, that the Council was set up and would operate:

"in compliance with [the existing system of government in the Kingdom] and in adherence to the Book of God and the tradition of His Messenger."

The term of the Majlis Al-Shoura is set at four years ([Hijira](#) Calendar), with a clear stipulation that, when a new Shoura Council is formed, at least half of those appointed must be new members.

(The setting of fixed terms in this instance may indicate a shift away from past policy of indefinite

### Related Items

- [Chairman of the Consultative Council](#)
- [Vice Chairman of the Consultative Council](#)
- [Secretary General of the Consultative Council](#)
- [Majlis Al-Shoura Law](#)
- [The Internal Bylaw of the Majlis Al-Shoura](#)

Main reference point:

- [Government](#)

tenure of political office.)

The scope of matters on which the Council may deliberate was very widely defined. The members of the initial Council were chosen to represent a wide mix of clan and religious leaders, business and professional men, as well as government officials. Academics formed the largest group, however, and there is an impressive number of members with advanced degrees.

Members of the new majlis will meet regularly in [Riyadh](#) in full session. Council members are expected to devote themselves

"to serve the common interest, preservation of the unity of the people, the entity of the state and the interests of the nation".

In practice, members of the Council are able to initiate legislation and review the domestic and foreign policies of the government. Any government action not approved by the Council will have to be referred back to the King. The King therefore remains the final arbiter of state affairs. The King also retains the power to appoint and dismiss both Ministers and Council members and has the power to dissolve the Council, restructure it, and appoint a new one at any time.

In 1997, King Fahd increased membership of the Consultative Council to 90 members. In 2001, the membership of the Consultative Council was again increased, on this occasion to 120.

By 1998, the Council was well established and operating effectively. In addition to its defined role in the political process, it had established a library containing more than 25,000 volumes, together with 305 periodicals in a number of languages as well as Arabic, and a total of more than 6,000 slides.

In grasping the significance of these measures, it is important to understand that the Kingdom's purpose in establishing the Majlis Al-Shoura and in introducing other planned reforms is to provide an institutional framework through which the traditional form of Saudi Arabian government, based on consultation within the context of the tenets and requirements of [Islam](#), can be most effectively expressed in today's increasingly complex and interdependent world.

The reforms can be seen as marking an important new chapter in the life of the Kingdom and King Fahd's desire to hasten the pace of modernization within the religious and cultural traditions of the Kingdom. The oil wealth has transformed the economy and infrastructure of Saudi Arabia in the past three decades. These measures mark the start of a cumulative process facilitating the modernization of Saudi Arabian government.

The reforms do not, however, mean that the Kingdom has moved away from its Islamic traditions. King Fahd himself stressed that his reforms were based on Islamic principles of fairness, decency and popular consultation.

In essence, the Consultative Council should be seen, not as a modest move towards Western-style democracy, but as an organic development of the consultative processes on which the Kingdom has been governed since its inception, processes which arose from a tradition that goes back to the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

- [Saudi Consultative Council web site](#)
- 



☐ Internet ☒ Saudinf